Kentucky Literacy Link

A Publication of the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE)

Be Thankful for the Small Things

Mikkaka "MK" Overstreet is a KDE literacy consultant and the editor of this publication. Contact her at mikkaka.overstreet@education.ky.gov.

In this season, we give thanks for our many blessings. We are thankful for plentiful food, beautiful homes and loving families. We recognize that, despite our trials, we live relatively stable lives when there are many in the world living in fear, poverty and danger.

While we should be exceedingly grateful for these things, it struck me that we should also give thanks for small blessings. We certainly curse our luck over small things. How frustrated we are when we get stopped by seemingly every

red light on the way home! How aggravated we become when a heavy bag rips and spills its contents or a misstep causes us to get our shoes dirty! Recently I was annoyed for several minutes because somehow my phone had reset the personalized ringtones I'd assigned to people.

What if we were thankful for things as insignificant as those we complain about? One morning it was pouring rain. Instead of being upset that I'd have a dangerous, long drive to work in Frankfort, I was grateful that I'd gotten gas yesterday and wouldn't have to stop in the downpour to fill up. Though the drive was long, I was grateful that I had a good audio-

book to listen to so that I could pass the time and get my yearned-for quota of fiction that I never have time to read anymore. I was glad that my husband had thoughtfully replaced my windshield wipers and that I had a cute coat with a hood that even matched my outfit.

When I meditated on all of these small things, they resonated in my spirit in a big way. If we spend more time recognizing and giving thanks for the small things in our lives, we'll be filled with a peace that tough times can't disturb. I wish you that peace this season and for all to come.

Kentucky Department of Education Updates

Submit Your Best Practices

Kentucky Best Practices is a dynamic database of information, literature and materials compiled from schools and districts and will be continuously updated. It is intended to support teachers, administrators, district personnel and any other education advocates seeking strategies that have been proven successful in a variety of settings.

In addition, this site recognizes and celebrates Kentucky schools that embody strategies that result in students who are college- and career-ready. By sharing their methods, we hope to demonstrate that best practices can be achieved in every school.

Each month the Best Practices team will spotlight some of the most promising best practices. All

reviewed best practice submissions may be found in the searchable database.

To learn more about submitting a best practice, how your submission will be evaluated or to see spotlighted programs and search the database, click here.

School, district best practices cited

The Kentucky Department of Education recognized 10 schools and districts for identifying and sharing 11 best practices through the department's Best Practices website.

During the Continuous Improvement Summit in Louisville, each school or district was publicly recognized and awarded $500 to be used toward school improvement.

The schools and districts recognized are:

- Bardstown City Schools
- Butler County Public Schools
- The Phoenix Academy (Clark County)
- Fern Creek Traditional High School (Jefferson County)
- Jefferson County Public Schools
- Thomas Jefferson Middle School (Jefferson County)
- Lawrence County High School
- Leslie County High School
- Madison County Schools
- Pulaski County Schools

More than 40 best practices that cover varying areas of school operations have been posted to the website. It can be accessed here or by going to the KDE website and searching "Best Practices."

Spotlight: New Literacies with Social Studies Content

This article was written by [Bill W. Simpson](#) of McCreary County Middle School and [Jennifer Simpson](#), of the University of the Cumberlands. Bill Simpson has taught social studies and language arts at the middle school level for more than a decade. He teaches 8th-grade American History at McCreary County Middle School. He also teaches education classes as an adjunct professor at University of the Cumberlands. Before becoming a professor, Jennifer Simpson participated in the English/Language Arts Leadership Network, was a part of the Adolescent Literacy Coaching Project (EKU-Cadre II), was a Reading First state trainer and worked at McCreary Central High School as literacy coach.

This article will be run in two parts, so please come back for more in next month's issue.

Nothing challenges the classroom teacher like the middle school student. The student is caught between the elementary eagerness to learn and the "know-it-all" independence of the high school student. However, the middle school classroom provides a great opportunity for learning if the teacher provides learning opportunities geared toward the way middle school student learns (which may not be synonymous with how the teacher was trained in his or her college methods class.) Students want to learn and they want to succeed; your task is to make a connection with them.

The level at which a middle school student achieves proficiency in social studies (SS) is linked to their literacy level (Heller & Greenleaf, 2007). Whereas disciplines such as mathematics or language arts rely on a student learning a specific set of skills that build on one another, being successful in SS

is essentially being able to read and comprehend information related to SS. There is no SS DNA that makes some students good at this subject. The key to doing well in SS involves learning to comprehend, organize and categorize what you are reading. This article will provide some practical strategies to make this happen, in a way that is simple for teachers to prepare, use and assess. The last thing we want is a complicated strategy that requires a lot of time to facilitate – time that classroom teachers simply don't have with the demands of today's school. These strategies are not only teacher-friendly, but they work!

Over the years we've heard many middle school students say "I'm just not good at SS" after failing a test, incorrectly completing a homework assignment or not turning in a project. We soon began to wonder if these students were also lacking in other subjects. Without exception, these students also had low reading comprehension scores and performed below average in subjects that required a great deal of content reading.

One of the keys to the successful fusion of reading and SS for middle school students is to understand how they typically view an assignment. To them, the assignment is the spinach casserole standing between them and dessert (e.g., free time to talk about music, dating, sports or the new kid). Once a teacher understands that, it makes classroom time more productive. Here are some techniques to accomplish this objective.

HISTORICAL TWEETS AND FAKEBOOK

Standard (RH.6-8.2) Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source: provide an accurate summary of the source dis-

tinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

The world that students are growing up in is most likely considerably different than the world of their teachers' youth. Gone are the days of writing letters, using encyclopedias and watching a slide show or video tape. These have been replaced by Twitter and Facebook, e-mails and instant messaging, Google, and on-demand digital media.

Kids live in a world where information and communication is instantaneous – facts that force them to take something they have read and express it in its simplest form. For Facebook, or in this situation "Fakebook," a template will be distributed to each student. The student must create a "status" about the assigned reading that demonstrates an understanding of the content by using key vocabulary and facts. In addition to their opinion, the student must circulate the Fakebook template to two others students who will "like" the post and "comment" on the student's template.

For the historical tweets activity, the parameters are one, no more than 140 characters and two, two hashtags showing connection to a greater concept. For example:

@GeorgeWashington Supplies running low, troops remain strong in spite of bad conditions and harsh winter. Our cause is worthy! #revolution #valleyforge #patriots

Reference:
Heller, R., Greenleaf, C. 2007. "Literacy Instruction in the Content Areas: Getting to the Core of Middle and High School Improvement." Alliance for Excellence in Education.

Introduction to the LumiBook *Mapping to the Core*

Join us for a webinar on Nov. 19. You are invited to a special, Kentucky-only webinar sponsored by Felicia Cumings Smith and the Office of Next-Generation Learners, and presented by Heidi Hayes Jacobs that will give you proven strategies for successfully mapping your curriculum to the Common

Core Standards:

- Get an overview of Phase Mapping to the Core mode – the Common Core implementation framework being used by some of the most successful schools in the U.S.
- Discuss your curriculum-planning questions with one of the nation's leading ex-

perts.

- Examine the dynamic new tools for implementation found on the LumiBook platform, available for free to all Kentucky educators.

Introduction to the LumiBook *"Mapping to the Core: Integrating the CCSS into Your Local School*

Curriculum and Assessments"
Date: Tuesday, Nov. 19, 2013
Time: 4-5 p.m. EST

After registering you will receive a confirmation e-mail containing information about joining the Webinar.

[Reserve your webinar seat now.](#)

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT NETWORK®

Beyond On-Demand: Best Practices in Writing Instruction

Mikkaka "MK" Overstreet is a KDE literacy consultant and the editor of this publication. This article was written with the assistance of the literacy team listed on page 8.

Kentucky teachers are working hard to meet the demands of the Kentucky Core Academic Standards (KCAS). The rigorous standards and the related assessments leave teachers with many questions. At KDE, we hear and seek to answer many of those questions. We know how dedicated our teachers are to the success of Kentucky students, and we admire your determination to ensure that success.

A major issue, of course, is assessment. The pressures of testing lead some teachers to focus heavily on preparing for the end-of-year assessment. While I understand the inclination, I cannot emphasize enough the importance of quality instruction over test preparation. The KCAS writing standards say it well: "To build a foundation for college and career readiness, students need to learn to use writing as a way of offering and supporting opinions, demonstrating understanding of the subjects they are studying, and conveying real and imagined experiences and events. They learn to appreciate that a key purpose of writing is to communicate clearly to an … audience, and … to accomplish a particular task and purpose … . To meet these goals, students must devote significant time and effort to writing, producing numerous pieces over short and extended time frames throughout the year."

The On-Demand Writing assessment is an opportunity for students to demonstrate what they have learned throughout the year through instruction and much practice. Since the instruction plays the role in the success of the students, it is important for everyone in the school to include literacy in their daily instruction. The Writing Program Review is a great guide for this. To assist your school with the process of developing a writing policy, we have several resources, available here.

While writing is the issue at hand, it is the whole literacy experience that helps create the habits of mind necessary for students to independently read, write and speak in an informed way. The Writing Program Review encourages best practices related to literacy opportunities and outlines them in the proficient and distinguished categories.

When considering writing instruction, focus on the three modes of writing (opinion/argumentative, informative/explanatory and narrative). Here is a document that should help guide you in your approach to these modes. When students are asked to display their abilities, either in an assessment or real life, they will be using one of these modes. Optimal experiences give students a chance to practice the three modes in many different forms for different audiences.

Mike Schmoker, in *Results Now*, encourages "generous amounts of close, purposeful reading, rereading, writing and talking." He says these are the "essence of authentic literacy" that are a "foundation for a trained, powerful mind and a promising future." To help ensure students are building this foundation, they need the opportunity to read and write regularly in all of their classes. When this is routine and when students receive regular, effective feedback, an on-demand writing assessment is just another piece of their routine. Many practices focus on prep for the on-demand assessment only. On-demand is not a mode of writing – it is an assessment. Low scores on this assessment indicate a focus on meaningful writing is needed.

As you give your children varied writing experiences, including those that mimic testing conditions, be sure to embed them within meaningful instruction. An on-demand writing prompt might be used as a formative assessment at the start of a unit or summatively to provide students an opportunity to apply recently taught skills.

In a recent National Council of Teachers of English forum, Nancy Patterson of Grand Valley responded to a teacher with these wise words: "I think perhaps the most important advice for you, though, is do not abdicate your common sense and your role as a teacher. You are not an instrument of (the assessment). You are a human being guiding other human beings. Be a person. Don't be a test-preparation drone looking for defects and ways to surgically strike at your wayward students. Give your students all kinds of experiences and advice about how to summarize effectively, how to analyze. Don't do this because of the test. Do it because these are one among many habits of mind that authors acquire. Help your authors acquire them."

Additional Resources:

- WPA Framework for Success
- January 2012 Literacy Link
- KDE Literacy Page
- K-PREP sample items and instructional resources
- Introduction to the Literacy Design Collaborative (LDC) and its website

CCSSO Navigating Text Complexity Website

Understanding text complexity is essential to implementing the Common Core State Standards in ELA and Literacy. But what makes a text complex and how will it help prepare my students for college and career? What tools can I use to select rich, worthy texts for instruction in my classroom? How can analyzing the qualitative characteristics of a text inform my instruction of a text?

Educators from 12 states came together to create a collection of online tools to navigate text complexity and text selection, which includes:

- text complexity roadmaps (comprehensive text analyses)
- model text sets for units of instruction
- support tools for analyzing your own texts and building your own text sets
- text-dependent question resources
- text roadmaps in the classroom – two sample lesson videos

Visit these resources, then, work with educators across the country to analyze texts, build text sets and generate rich text-dependent questions by joining the interactive Edmodo group.

Participants include educators from Connecticut, Hawaii, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Michigan, Missouri, North Carolina, West Virginia and Wyoming, members of CCSSO's ELA State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards.

'Both and' Literacy Instruction K-5: A Proposed Paradigm Shift

David Liben and his wife, Meredith Liben, are literacy experts who have worked extensively with the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and Student Achievement Partners. Their recent article, available here, is housed on achievethecore.org. Below, you will find an excerpt from the introduction to their white paper.

In *'Both and' Literacy Instruction K-5: A Proposed Paradigm Shift for the Common Core State Standards ELA Classroom,* David and Meredith Liben discuss necessary shifts in thinking and teaching to ensure instruction congruent with the *Common Core State Standards* (adopted in Kentucky as the Kentucky Core Academic Standards.) According to Liben and Liben, students will need to be engaged in "both and" literacy instruction, meaning that all of the following elements need to be available in a way that provides a coherent experience for students: solid grounding in the foundational reading skills, development of academic language (vocabulary and syntax), the steady growth of knowledge, experiences that lead to the judicious use of comprehension strategies, the ability to express thoughts and learning clearly through speaking and writing, and the capacity and motivation to sustain a volume of engaged reading.

All this takes time. It takes lots of time. To

be successful, a program must be generous in allocating adequate time for students to engage in the practices that will make them strong readers and allow more time yet for the students who need more. Richard Allington has argued for decades that students need lots of time to read and to be directly helped to do so (2002).

Along with students, teachers need time set aside to come together, focus on instruction and curriculum, and learn about these best practices. This is all easier said than done of course.

But there is a good chance that time will be allocated well if: schools and teachers value the work highly, can keep themselves honest about time constraints, can agree to

focus on all the ingredients of a full literacy program, and can encourage reading, writing, speaking and listening to percolate through all subjects.

Teachers need to be able to envision how the components of such a comprehensive program can fit into their current classroom practices. The intent here is to help teachers determine which aspects of their current practice are inherently aligned with the CCSS and which aspects of existing practices must be added to, adapted or shifted. The lens for this examination will be the elements identified above.

Through conducting such an evaluation, educators can make thoughtful decisions regarding how to adjust their practice and materials, while schools and districts can consider rationally and carefully what shifts in scheduling, programming, school priorities and resource allocations need to be put into place as supports for the teachers and children. The resultant decisions can then have a strong likelihood of leading to healthy literacy learning outcomes for a great number of children.

To read more of *'Both and' Literacy Instruction K-5: A Proposed Paradigm Shift for the Common Core State Standards ELA Classroom*, click here.

Technology Critique: iCivics

Benjamin Stephens teaches computer lab at Auburndale Elementary in Jefferson County.

I have used iCivics several times to help students prepare for a variety of social studies tests. Overall the students really enjoy it, but this is definitely a site where students can become lost and not get anything out of it. Clear expectations are a must.

Students control an avatar that interacts with other avatars (controlled by the computer, not other users). One particularly engaging game is, "Do I have the right?". The action is fast-paced and allows the user to build up his or her own law firm. Students are given a chance to become actual members of the community they are learning about. They can act like a congressperson, Supreme Court justice, presidential candidate and more. The game play is very engrossing.

Ease of Use
Many of these games can be quite a struggle. The site does offer tutorials and in-game help for especially confusing parts. If you are going to use this with a class, modeling each game would be very helpful. There is also a great deal of heavy reading at various points. Some students might benefit from a partner while using this site.

As far as demonstrating game play goes, the site does a strong job with tutorials. The game focused on how a bill gets passed runs students through the three branches of government from an insider perspective. This site is tackling some very complex issues, but definitely demonstrates how certain government tasks are accomplished. It would be neat if there was a demo mode for struggling students to just watch the game initially.

Approximation
Failure is OK on this site. The game provides the user a score, and in all the games it will let students fail. For example, the student may not get a law passed. However, she can quickly restart the game and try again.

Response
The site provides a results screen at the end of the game. This can allow an adult to see if the student played the game successfully. I had some success with students blogging about the various games they played and tried to encourage connections to their classroom learning.

Multi-Modality
This is an amazing site for strong readers. There are videos, avatars to control, music, and interactions. The only downside is the lack of an option to have the text read aloud. Overall, this is a shining beacon for a multi-modal site.

National History Day in Kentucky

KentuckyHistoricalSociety
Connections. Perspective. Inspiration.

Cheryl Caskey is the student programs coordinator for the Kentucky Historical Society. She can be reached at (502) 564-1792, ext. 4461.

National History Day (NHD) is an academic program for 6th- through 12th-grade students nationally and 4th-through 12th-grade students in Kentucky. Each state and six international schools participate in the program each year. Participation is open to all students and, while they can choose to compete, it is more than a one-day competition.

Students develop 21st-century skills as they learn how to critically investigate a topic; communicate their findings effectively, collaborate with fellow students, teachers and professionals; and creatively present their findings to a variety of audiences. Beyond that, they become better prepared for the rigors of higher education and professional careers as they develop:

- a sense of obligation and commitment to others
- a will to take initiative
- a thought process that includes unconventional answers
- a skill set that is required to bring creative ideas to their full potential
- a talent to build and maintain good relationships with individuals of diverse personalities
- a confidence to remain firm and clear without being aggressive

Students become engaged with the topics because they choose something of interest to them that they want to learn more about. Choices must fit the annual theme, which is deliberately broad so as to encompass many options. (This year's theme is Rights and Responsibilities in History.) Next,

students conduct their own research using primary sources, thus enabling them to become experts on their topic and giving them ownership you might not see with a traditional book report. In-depth reading is required to adequately analyze their topic, thus encouraging literacy development. This program is not simply meant to get students interested in history; rather, it provides the impetus for students to want to learn more about any subject.

Students choose a topic that interests them and present their research in a non-traditional way to an authentic audience. NHD also addresses Kentucky Core Academic Standards (KCAS), particularly those outlined as literacy in history/social studies, science and technical subjects. Below is a sample of these connections:

- Reading History 1: Explicit/implicit meanings – Students who create NHD projects must use multiple resources, including primary sources, and conduct extensive analysis for applicability to their research question and thesis.
- Writing History 6: Technology – Each of the NHD project types (exhibit, paper, website, documentary and performance) requires use of technology. Many NHD students conduct research using online resources like digital library collections. NHD students can create a website or documentary. Students who create an exhibit board can incorporate sound and video. Many use online writing tools (Google docs, My Big Campus, zotero, etc.) to share their sources or collaborate with teachers, peers and professionals.
- Speaking and Listening 1: Collaboration – Students can choose to work in groups. Students also collaborate with

their teachers, who provide project guidance, and librarians and scholars, who can help them find resources, and are encouraged to seek personal interviews to support their research.

- Speaking and Listening 4: Presentation – No matter which format students choose to present their research, they must make a coherent argument for their thesis through the use of selected primary and secondary sources.

I wish I had known about NHD as a student. It would have prepared me with the skills necessary for college: constructing arguments, creating an annotated bibliography and public speaking. NHD teaches these skills at a young age so that by the time students reach college they will be ahead of the curve. I have seen students gain confidence in their abilities in just one year of participation. It is incredible to witness what students can do when given an opportunity like this program.

I end with a quote from an NHD parent about the benefits of participation for her daughter Emma, a junior in Menifee County: "Emma's ACT reading score increased from a 21 to a 29 as a result of the informational text she read to research her topic for National History Day. My daughter's education would be much weaker without NHD. This experience is priceless! It covers all the "Cs" of 21st-century learning. NHD had an observable, positive impact on my daughter's life. I am so grateful." – Becky Roach

Click here for more resources and a complete guide to the connections with common core. For information specific to NHD in Kentucky, visit the Kentucky Historical Society's website.

Letters About Literature 2014 Contest Rules and Guidelines

Letters About Literature (LAL) is a reading and writing contest for students in grades 4-12. Students are asked to read a book, poem or speech and write to that author (living or dead) about how the book affected them personally.

Letters are judged on state and national levels. Tens of thousands of students from across

the country enter Letters About Literature each year. Students in grades 4-12 are eligible to enter the Letters About Literature reading and writing contest.

LAL awards prizes on both the state and national levels. Each participating state center has its own panel of judges who select the top essayists in the state. State winners will receive a cash award

and advance to the national-level judging. A panel of national judges for the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress will select one national winner per competition level to receive a $1,000 cash award.

The judges also will select one national honor per competition level to receive a $200 cash award.

Grades 9-12 entries must be postmarked by Dec. 10, 2013. Grades 4-8 must be postmarked by Jan. 10, 2014.

Read previous national-winning entries here. Read our state winners in the May 2013 *Literacy Link*. Click here for rules and guidelines.

Engaging Families: What Should Teachers Tell Parents About the Common Core?

A recent PDK/Gallup poll found that most Americans, including more than half of public school parents, are unaware of the Common Core State Standards, which are now being implemented in the vast majority of school districts. The survey found that even respondents who knew about the standards were often confused or misinformed about them.

A PDK executive suggested that some educators' reservations about the standards (and how assessment results might be used) may keep them from reaching out to parents. At the same time, in some districts, teachers' efforts to give parents information about the standards have been met with hostility owing to political factors.

In your view, what role should teachers play in informing parents about the common standards? How can they effectively help parents and other stakeholders understand why and how instruction is changing? Have competing viewpoints about the standards affected your approach to talking to parents about them?

Teaching Ahead, an interactive project jointly developed by *Education Week Teacher* and the Center for Teaching Quality, is designed to bring greater exposure to the ideas of standout classroom educators on the future of their profession. Each month, selected teacher panelists are asked to respond to

and discuss key issues in education policy and instructional practice. The discussions are intended to help inform the national conversation on the direction of public schools.

Addressing this month's question are Ali Wright, a National Board-certified teacher of Algebra 2 and AP Calculus at Lafayette High School in Lexington; Rod Powell, a National Board-certified social studies teacher from North Carolina; Jane Fung, a National Board-certified teacher in urban Los Angeles, currently teaching 1st grade; Ilana Garon, an English teacher at a high school in the Bronx, NY; and Jessica Cuthbertson, a Colorado educator of middle school literacy. To read this roundtable discussion, visit *Education Week Teacher* here.

Continuous Instructional Improvement Technology System Updates

Enhancements have been made to the Instructional Management System within CIITS. Here is a summary of the new features:

- Assessment capabilities have been extended to more fully support complex performance-based tasks.
- Test authors can incorporate audio and video files into assessments as part of the assessment items, passages or answer choices for delivery to students through the online test tunnel.
- The student's test-taking

toolbox has new tools, including a four-function calculator, scientific calculator, graphing calculator and formula sheet.

Renaissance Learning Data added to CIITS
KDE is partnering with Renaissance Learning to add interim assessment data to CIITS. Renaissance provides the data through an efficient direct data transfer to Schoolnet, our CIITS vendor.

In accordance with the Family

Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), districts that want their Renaissance Learning assessment data included in CIITS must provide authorization by completing this Data Disclosure Authorization form. Return the signed agreement to Maritta Horne, CIITS service lead.

Enhancement to CIITS Gradebook Transfer Process
The process that sends grades from CIITS to Infinite Campus has been enhanced. For enhancement details, please see the KSIS Notification sent to

KSIS contacts Aug. 27. (KSIS Notifications are available on the KSIS Alerts and Notifications Web page for 60 days.)

CIITS District Webcasts
KDE conducted a CIITS Update for Districts webcast Aug. 22 using Lync Online Meeting Space. The session covered new CIITS features and functionality and provided a chance for district staff to ask questions. KDE conducted additional sessions. All sessions were recorded and available on the CIITS training Web page.

Upcoming Literacy Events Around Kentucky

KCTE/LA Annual Conference
The Kentucky Council of Teachers of English/Language Arts will host its annual conference Feb. 21-22, 2014. Entitled "Bridging the Literacy Gap," the 78th Anniversary Conference will be held at the Embassy Suites Lexington. For more information and to register, visit its website.

Jesse Stuart Reading Council 2013 Mini-Conference
EKU Libraries will host the Jesse Stuart Reading Council 2013 Mini-Conference 4-8 p.m. Nov. 19. The theme is "Teaching with Informational Texts." Registration is $10 for

KRA Members, $15 for KRA Non-Members, $5 for full-time student /KRA members and includes a Chik-fil-A dinner. For information on registration or KRA membership, please e-mail heather.beirne@eku.edu.

HistoryMobile Available for School Visits
The Kentucky Historical Society's HistoryMobile is available to visit elementary, middle and high schools in Kentucky. This full-sized tractor and trailer contains an interactive exhibition called "Torn Within and Threatened Without: Kentuckians in the Civil War Era," which uses personal recollections, authentic artifacts and touch

-screen activities to teach critical thinking, literacy and college- and career-readiness. Student activities are tied to Common Core ELA standards and emphasize critical thinking, research skills, creativity and literacy.

To schedule a visit from the HistoryMobile or to find out more information, contact Kate Sowada at kate.sowada@ky.gov or (502) 564-1792, ext. 4458. You also can learn more by visiting http://history.ky.gov/portfolio/what-would-you-choose/.

PD 360: New Content Releases

The following content has been updated or is new to the platform. Please take a minute to check out what's new!

PD 360 Updated Content:
Using Data to Close the Achievement Gap
New Training Videos:
Adding Resources to Communities
Running Reports
Webinars:
Charleston Promise Neighborhood – School-Based Health Services
Charleston Promise Neighborhood – Community Engagement

Using Data to Close the Achievement Gap
Summary
The *Using Data to Close the Achievement Gap* program outlines the practice of drawing on multiple sources of data to inform more-equitable practices for student success in schools across the country. In these nine segments, Ruth S. Johnson, a professor of educational administration at California State University, Los Angeles, explains how educators can analyze a variety of data sources to reform practices and stimulate change that provides for the success of all students.

Segment Information
The program contains nine segments:
Using Data to Close the Achievement Gap
Examining all types of data is essential in understanding and closing the achievement gaps that exist in schools. Johnson has focused on this topic throughout her career and has found that strategic data analysis is one of the most effective ways to address these achievement gaps. Once these gaps are identified, educators can begin to make effective changes that will forge new beliefs and practices in schools.

The Achievement Gap
The purpose of studying data is to determine how students are performing and to identify and address the achievement gaps that exist between different groups of students according to race, gender, ethnicity and socioeconomic background. Equity practice is tied to providing high expectations and appropriate resources so that all students can achieve at the same level of rigor. Research suggests that successful schools have the following characteristics in common: high standards, accountability, highly qualified teachers, high classroom rigor and continuous inquiry and monitoring

of student performance data.

Building Dissatisfaction and Killing the Myths
When educators actually study the data related to achievement gaps, they are able to make more-informed decisions about how to influence positive change in their schools. Many students have equally high aspirations but unequal chances to achieve them due to three significant factors: school culture, variations in rigor and teacher effectiveness. When schools establish equity goals, they are deliberate about setting targets that lead to equity and higher achievement among all students. Nightingale Middle School in Los Angeles, is an example of implementing these practices.

Data in the Reform Process
Data plays a critical role in a school's reform process. When educators effectively analyze data, they are able to create dialogue about equity and ascertain which groups are doing well, which groups need improvement and why. Using the data also empowers teachers to influence and improve conditions in their own classrooms, as well as to monitor progress. By incorporating data into school reform, educators create a culture of inquiry that leads to greater awareness, solutions and outcomes for all involved.

Building Leadership and Data Teams
This segment explores how building leadership and data teams are instrumental in closing achievement gaps in schools. These teams facilitate equity work and can include administrators, teachers, parents and even students who are proficient in the use of data. The leadership team's primary role is to train teachers to effectively use data to close achievement gaps and engage in action research to evaluate school-reform efforts. These teams also shape the belief system needed to remodel the culture of their school. Principals can help foster a culture of risk-taking and innovation that helps educators follow through with change. Some schools in New York City provide examples of putting these efforts into practice.

Talking About Data
Talking about data and its impact on equity is the first step in closing the achievement gap. Principals and leadership teams can foster a culture of dialogue that includes conversations about race, ethnicity and socioeconomic background. When examining quantitative data, it is important to identify problems,

create hypotheses, test assumptions and gather additional data. Qualitative approaches to gathering data include interviews and focus groups, observations, archives, documents, and journals and diaries.

Examining Outcomes
As educators begin examining outcome data, they can significantly improve student achievement. Examining outcomes involves seeing the bigger picture of students graduating high school and college, as well as examining standardized test scores. It also involves monitoring student grades, course enrollment and overall progress. Public School 102 in East Harlem, N.Y., demonstrates how educators used outcome data and a strong sense of collaboration to increase student performance levels.

Examine All Aspects of School
Schools extend the use of data's reach in closing achievement gaps by assessing policies, practices, programs, interventions and school culture. Educators can use a wide range of data resources, including existing school documents, classroom practices, observations and feedback from students and teachers. The math department at Blair High School in Pasadena, Calif., outlines its efforts in closing achievement gaps. Teachers have seen increased student success by changing course scope and sequence, aligning the curriculum, creating common assessments, increasing teacher input on the master schedule, and having regular team reflection.

Will We Know It When We See It
As educators become effective users of data, they can foster school improvement by incorporating four important principles: visioning, planning, implementing and monitoring. With determination and a will to succeed, educators can improve equity and help all children learn in this global society.

Segment Length
Using Data to Close the Achievement Gap (7:15)
The Achievement Gap (6:23)
Building Dissatisfaction and Killing the Myths (9:13)
Data in the Reform Process (5:30)
Building Leadership and Data Teams (14:50)
Talking About Data (17:48)
Examining Outcomes (10:29)
Examine All Aspects of School (15:20)
Will We Know It When We See It (5:50)

Help

Your contributions of ideas and lessons that work are welcome. E-mail mikkaka.overstreet @education.ky.gov to submit. Your submissions may be included in the *Literacy Link* to help connect teachers across the state by sharing ideas, insights and best practices.

Access this and past *Literacy Links* on KDE's website:
Click Here

EVERY CHILD
PROFICIENT & PREPARED FOR
S U C C E S S
KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

If you have questions or concerns, we want to help. Contact:

- Cindy Parker – Literacy Coordinator – cindy.parker@education.ky.gov
- Kelly Clark – Literacy Consultant – kelly.clark@education.ky.gov
- Jackie Rogers – Literacy Consultant – jackie.rogers@education.ky.gov
- Teresa Rogers – Literacy Consultant – teresa.rogers@education.ky.gov
- Pamela Wininger – Literacy Consultant – pamela.wininger@education.ky.gov
- MK Overstreet – Literacy Consultant – mikkaka.overstreet@education.ky.gov
- Kathy Mansfield– Library Media/Textbooks Consultant – kathy.mansfield@education.ky.gov

Feedback from the Field

Your feedback helps us to tailor the Link *to best meet the needs of teachers. Tell us how you're using it. Tell us what you want to see more or less of. We want to hear from you!* E-mail MK Overstreet.

"I always enjoy reading and sharing the *Literacy Link.* It is a great resource!"

     - Brenda O.

"Thank you for the technology critiques! I've discovered several new things to try out in my classroom and thanks to your reviews I know what to expect in advance!"

     - Elizabeth C.

"Thank you for including the piece on library media programs. I appreciate the way your newsletter is inclusive of other content and itinerant areas. Keep it coming."

     - Michael M.

Additional Reading and Other Resources

- Children's Environmental Literature –This bibliography was developed as a supplemental resource for Wisconsin's Project Learning Tree (PLT), Project WILD and Project WET programs, and Learning, Experiences & Activities in Forestry (LEAF). The majority of listed books focus on Midwest ecosystems for children ages 4-12.
- *Hidden Resources At Your Fingertips: How To Uncover Rich, Free Text Collections On Any Topic At Any Level!* You also can access the PowerPoint presentation here.To learn how to navigate these targeted resources, please contact profdev@lexile.com or a (919) 547-3412.
- LiteracyLink is a joint project of PBS Adult Learning Service, the National Center on Adult Literacy of the University of Pennsylvania, Kentucky Educational Television and KDE. Its goal is to provide a link for underserved and hard-to-reach adults and their teachers to quality adult basic edu-

cation and GED preparation tools using technology. Combining video, the Internet and print materials, LiteracyLink programs are relevant to the needs of the individual learner, adult instructional programs and the workforce.

- Materials from the recent event **Early Literacy Forum: Reimagining the Possibilities** are available here. This convening, made possible by a grant from the National Governor's Association and co-sponsored by KDE, the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Education, the Kentucky Reading Association and the Collaborative Center for Literacy Development, sought to ensure districts and stakeholders are aware of and able to implement support of the state literacy plan by engaging in effective parent engagement and professional learning opportunities for early care professionals. Posted materials include: Literacy Forum program, David Dickinson

keynote PowerPoint, National Governor's Association PowerPoint and Link to NGA Guide.

- The Kentucky Governor's Office of Early Childhood sends out a newsletter for families each month that includes information and ideas on how to help children develop in their earliest years. This month, it talks about incorporating science in daily activities with children. You can view these newsletters online or print and share with family and friends.
- *Kentucky Teacher,* the Kentucky Department of Education's (KDE's) award-winning online publication, is the place to go to stay abreast of what is happening in Kentucky's public schools. *Kentucky Teacher* includes education news, feature articles that highlight successful classroom practice, helpful resources and more.